



*Habitat is where it's at!*

*September 2016*



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

**IT'S HUNTIN'SEASON**  
**Pronghorn Forecast for SW Wyoming**  
**Compiled by Mark Zornes, Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator**

*Antelope numbers increased again* throughout most of the Green River Region during 2015, with the exception of localized areas with long term drought and poor habitat. Numbers remain very low in Hunt Area 96, but this is one of the few areas in southwest Wyoming where numbers haven't returned to more acceptable levels. Fawn production was particularly good again in all the western hunt areas of the region, and increased in the South Rock Springs, Bitter Creek and Baggs herds. This is following a long term decline in much of the region due to extreme drought and severe winter weather (especially in 2010-2011). Conditions during the 2015 summer and 2015-2016 winter have been above average in both temperature and moisture, which should result in another year of good fawn production.

*Hunters can expect another good year* of pronghorn hunting in the Green River Region in the majority of hunt areas. Buck numbers remain very good and significant opportunity exists for buck and doe-fawn hunters in much of the region.

**Special dates and points of interest:**

- PREFERENCE POINT ONLY APPLICATION PERIOD JULY 1 THROUGH OCTOBER 31
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER EDUCATION CERTIFICATE? CHECK OUT COURSE LISTINGS AT OUR WEBSITE [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://WGFD.WYO.GOV)
- MANY HUNTING SEASONS OPENED SEPTEMBER 1-CHECK YOUR HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR SEASON DATES AND RESTRICTIONS THAT APPLY.
- HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM (HIP) PERMITS ARE FREE BUT THEY ARE ONLY AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.



**Buck antelope near Buckboard Marina**  
**August 11 (Wold Photos)**  
**Kokanee spawn in Sheep Creek-top banner**





Eastern hunt areas in the region (Hunt Areas 53 and 55 - Baggs herd unit), and (Hunt Area 57 and 58 - Bitter Creek herd unit), will have more opportunity for buck or doe-fawn licenses when compared to last year, including a new Type 2 license for any antelope in Hunt Area 57. Type 1 licenses in Hunt Area 58 will increase but remain low due to low overall pronghorn numbers and poorer buck ratios. Herd wide impacts ranging from heavy development to competition with feral horses, elk, and livestock, habitat degradation due to conversion, unsuccessful reclamation, and drought, make it unlikely the Bitter Creek herd unit will return to numbers seen prior to the 1993-1994 winter in the near future. We are seeing an increase in overall numbers herd-wide and things are looking up for this herd due to improved precipitation which dramatically improved habitat conditions. The current objective for this herd is 13,000 pronghorn.

The South Rock Springs herd unit is currently near objective, and is increasing. Doe hunting opportunities were added this year to maintain this herd at objective. Buck (Type 1) licenses in Hunt Areas 59 and 112 are being held at 2015 levels.

The Green River Region manages the southern three hunt areas in the Sublette pronghorn herd, one of the largest herds in the state that stretches from Jackson Hole to Rock Springs. Excluding Hunt Area 85 in the Jackson Region, two of these three southernmost areas (Hunt Areas 92 and 96) have the lowest densities of antelope in the herd unit. Given antelope numbers in both these areas, and the eastern half of Hunt Area 93 remain below desired numbers, doe-fawn and some buck opportunity has been eliminated or greatly reduced over the past few years. Antelope densities are much higher in the western half of Hunt Area 93, and doe-fawn opportunity there (Hunt Area 93-7) will be increased. Additionally, we are proposing a new Type 8 license to direct doe-fawn harvest to irrigated lands in this western half of this hunt area. Pronghorn densities remain so low in Hunt Area 96 that we again propose to hunt this area in combination with Hunt Area 92.

The Carter Lease herd unit remains at objective. The herd unit is comprised of Hunt Areas 94, 98, and 100. Hunt Areas 98 and 100 are intentionally managed for very low antelope numbers due to competition concerns with Wyoming Range mule deer. These areas are higher in elevation and have very good fawn productivity, and we propose to issue similar licenses as in 2015, with the exception of a modest reduction in Hunt Area 98-6 licenses. Hunt Area 94 is managed for 5,000 pronghorn. The summer of 2012 and 2013 was particularly hard on this portion of the population, with observed fawn ratios declining from an average in the 70s:100 does, to the low 30s.

This, combined with losses incurred during the 2010-2011 winter, and a high harvest of female antelope, led to a population reduction. However, fawn production returned to higher levels in 2014 and 2015, which should push the population a little above objective again.



Two nice "town" buck deer graze along Astle Avenue in Green River early September (Wold Photos)

Therefore, we are proposing to maintain the number of doe-fawn licenses for the entire hunt area (Hunt Area 94-Type 6), which should maintain this herd near objective.

We also plan to maintain the same number of doe-fawn licenses that focus harvest in agricultural areas with antelope damage concerns (Type 7s). In response to good buck ratios, we are increasing Type 1 licenses in Hunt Area 94.

The Uinta-Cedar Mountain herd unit consists of Hunt Areas 95 and 99, which have very different habitats and pronghorn densities. The eastern area (Hunt Area 95) tends to be drier, is known for larger bucks, but has relatively low fawn production. Areas of localized damage near the Bridger Valley exist in the western portion of Hunt Area 95 and are addressed with an increased number of Type 7 licenses. The western area (Hunt Area 99) is much wetter, with significant areas of irrigated meadows. Damage concerns are higher in this area, and fawn production is much higher. Doe/fawn opportunity (Type 6 licenses) is typically high in this area, but is being reduced somewhat since this herd is now below objective. We are proposing an increase in Type 7 licenses in both hunt areas to address agricultural damage concerns, but are reducing Type 6 licenses in Hunt Area 99 due to herd status.

### Deer Forecast

Mule deer numbers in the Green River Region, much like in the entire range of this species, have declined over the long-term. This is due primarily to lower average annual fawn production and recruitment. However, some populations in the region have shown positive growth since the 2010-11 winter. Seasons in these more productive areas (the eastern and western end of the region) are being liberalized or maintained as deer numbers increase. Deer in the central portion of the region continue to decline due to poorer habitat conditions and impacts of long-term, severe drought. Barring a return to 1940-1960s era habitat conditions and significantly more precipitation, seasons will likely continue to be conservative and opportunities will continue to decline if deer numbers keep trending downward in these areas.

Mule deer seasons will remain very conservative in the drier portions of the Region, including Hunt Area 131 in the Sublette herd, and the South Rock Springs hunt areas in 2016.

The Baggs mule deer herd is made up of three Hunt Areas, (82, 84 and 100). Hunt Area 84 is hunted under a very conservative limited quota season due to access concerns. Hunt Area 82 is one of the most heavily hunted deer areas in the state and is very popular with both residents and non-residents. Harvest in this area vies for the top spot on an annual basis. This portion of the herd tends to be robust, and recent improvements in fawn production and recruitment have increased deer numbers in this area, to the point we are now significantly above objective and require additional doe harvest. This population remains in an upward trend.





*Mule deer near Firehole (above and below)  
(Wold Photos)*



*Little Mountain buck  
Photo: Andy Roosa, WGFD*

Fawn ratios were good the last three years, as was recruitment and survival, and deer numbers have shown a noticeable increase. Winter losses in 2015-16 were light but higher than the previous two winters, when losses were barely noticeable. We propose to offer similar antlered deer hunting this year in Hunt Area 82, (twelve days) and again propose to offer combination deer/antlerless elk hunting for youth following the general season. Buck ratios remain high in light of a recent two year antler point restriction (APR) season combined with dramatically improved fawn recruitment. Increased mule deer numbers and a population that is above objective suggest increased doe harvest is warranted. Therefore, we are proposing 500 Type 6 antlerless licenses for 2016 in Hunt Area 82.

Given very few deer occupy Hunt Area 100 during the hunting season (this is primarily winter range); we are again proposing a very short general season in this area.

Hunt Area 131 is a low density deer area associated with the much larger Sublette herd unit to the north. Except during winter, this area remains a low density hunt area, with low numbers of resident deer. Only in the agricultural fields near Farson-Eden, and the west end of this hunt area along the Green River, are deer densities somewhat satisfactory to the hunting public. These areas also incur annual agricultural damage to private property. While the hunt area covers a large geographical area, deer numbers throughout the remainder of the herd are very low and unlikely to improve, barring significantly increased and regular precipitation and improved habitat conditions. Habitat conditions will not support large deer densities throughout the majority of this dry, desert area. We again propose a very short hunt in this area, a restrictive 4 point APR season and eliminating all doe licenses.

The South Rock Springs herd unit (Hunt Areas 101 and 102) is managed under a conservative limited quota scenario and is a favorite (but exceedingly difficult to draw) of both residents and non-residents.

*Over time, opportunity has been reduced* due to public desires for fewer hunters and an expectation this will result in large numbers of large antlered buck mule deer, which has proven to not be the case. The proposal for 2016 will be the same as in 2015, a season with significantly reduced hunter opportunity due to declining deer numbers and concerns about buck quality.

*There has been nearly no doe harvest in this herd unit since 1994* and this population has not responded due to limitations in habitat and low fawn production and recruitment. Doe deer in this herd, recently captured for the Deer and Elk Ecology Research (D.E.E.R) project average 60 pounds lighter than adjacent herds and have very limited fat deposition, a condition not conducive to raising or recruiting healthy fawns. Despite very conservative seasons with minimal license allocation that allow for maximum population growth, the hunting public continues to request additional reductions in licenses.

*While significant losses occurred* in the western 1/3 of the region during the 2010-11 winter, mule deer numbers have recently increased due to good survival and improved fawn numbers from 2012 to 2015 in both the Uinta and southern portion of the Wyoming Range herd units. These areas include Hunt Areas 132, 133, and 168 (Uinta herd unit) and Hunt Areas 134 and 135 (Green River portion of the Wyoming Range herd). Significant deer losses occurred in both areas in 2007-08 and again in 2010-11. Additionally, losses were likely heavier during the 2012-13 winter in the Uinta herd than the Wyoming Range, due to poorer summer, transition, and winter habitats. A combination of very limited doe harvest, and recent improved survival and fawn production has led to increased deer numbers and increased populations trends. Herd growth is punctuated at intervals (usually every three-four years) with significant winter losses, but we are entering the 6th year of below average (maybe average in 2015-16 winter in some areas) mortality and increased fawn recruitment. While we would like to see more deer to satisfy public demands in these herds, deer numbers have been given unlimited potential for growth, and are likely at capacity. Predator control efforts are very high in both herd units, but we have seen limited corresponding increase in deer numbers. We continue to propose relatively conservative antlered only deer seasons and there are APR seasons in Hunt Areas 132, 133, 134, and 168. Hunt Area 132 has been under an antler point restriction for a number of years. This is a popular season with the local hunting public. Since buck ratios are very good already throughout most of these areas, a full two week season is again warranted.

*Due to a recent increase in observed white-tailed deer* in most Regional hunt areas, the harvest of any white-tailed deer will be permitted during general seasons.



#### **Elk Forecast**

*The Green River Region manages* six elk herd units and twelve hunt areas, under varying management schemes. With the exception of the West Green River herd, most elk herds are above post-season population objectives. Most general license herds in this region have liberal "any elk" seasons, followed by general license "antlerless" seasons, and also have liberal numbers of antlerless licenses or additional cow/calf licenses.



**General license elk herd units** in this region include: West Green River (Hunt Areas 102-105), Uinta (Hunt Areas 106 and 107), and Sierra Madre (Hunt Areas 13, 15, 21, 108, and 130). Hunting will remain good in all of these areas, but seasons are becoming significantly more conservative in West Green River as the population is near objective. We will continue with very liberal seasons in both the Sierra Madre and Uinta herd units until objectives are achieved. Elk herds above objective have a potential to negatively impact other species, and are often in conflict with agriculture operations. These conflicts range from direct loss of stored crops to disease concerns, primarily brucellosis. Elk seasons have been dramatically liberalized during the past decade in an effort to check growth and return numbers to appropriate levels.

**The Green River Region also manages** two herd units under limited quota special management, which provides high bull ratios and older-aged males. Both the Steamboat (Hunt Area 100) and the South Rock Springs (Hunt Area 30-32) herds are under special management guidelines and seasons are managed conservatively to maintain a quality experience for the hunting public. Both herds are very popular with the hunting community. In the case of the South Rock Springs herd, we are constantly balancing the needs of this species with the needs of the South Rock Springs mule deer herd, also under special management. While one likely has negative impacts on the other, the need for this balance is difficult to achieve. We have been much more aggressive in managing both herds in recent years, with significant cow harvest. Recent field data suggest significantly more licenses are needed in the Steamboat herd, especially for antlerless elk to address increasing population trends.

**Opportunity in the Petition herd unit** (Hunt Area 124) was increased for both bulls and cows in 2012 and 2015 in response to public comments and concern over growing elk numbers and impacts to deer and pronghorn. We are proposing additional increases in response to growing elk numbers and concerns for competition with other native ungulates, and will offer more cow hunting opportunity on and around the Tipton HMA to reduce landowner conflicts.



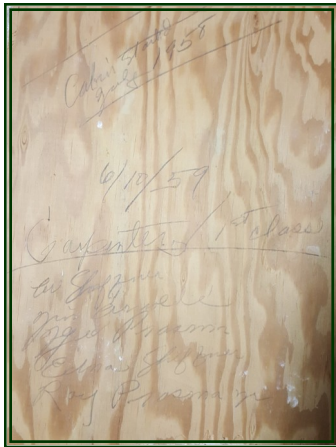
**Collared elk on Little Mountain from the D.E.E.R. Project. (above)**  
**Happy 2015 moose hunter from the Bridger Valley. The moose was harvested in HA 26.**

**(Wold photos)**

**Moose populations declined** in the mid-2000s throughout the Green River Region and other herds in western Wyoming for unknown reasons. Similar population declines have been observed in many moose populations across North America, but to date, scientists have been unable to determine the exact cause.

**The Green River Region** responded to declining populations by eliminating all antlerless moose hunting opportunities. Antlered moose hunting was significantly reduced as well. Until moose populations rebound, moose hunting will remain conservative in southwest Wyoming, including Hunt Areas 26, 27, 33 (reopened in 2014), 35, 36, 40 (season is closed in Hunt Area 44). Moose populations are starting to show a little positive growth over the past four years.

## ~ LaBarge Patrol Cabin Upgrade~



**Carpenters  
first class!**



**Left to right: Patrick Burke, Chris Baird,  
Nick Roberts, Rob Shipe and Justin Dodd.**



Mountain View Wildlife Biologist **Jeff Short** spent his August checking anglers and working on the La Barge Cr. Cabin. He also spent most of August almost entirely on the ground doing antelope classification surveys. "I found very good fawn and buck numbers in the areas that I classify," Short said. "I also saw some good mule deer bucks and bull elk. It should be a fun fall for hunters. Water sources are drying up quickly and the habitat is looking parched. A little fall precipitation to provide for some fall green up would help wildlife to enter the winter in better shape."

Cokeville Game Warden **Neil Hymas** also completed his pronghorn pre-hunting season classifications. "The higher elevation areas like hunt areas 98 and 100 near Cokeville continue to have good reproduction with high fawn ratios," Hymas said. "Buck ratios continue to exceed recreational minimums, which should result in continued good success rates and high quality hunting experiences for sportsmen."

Green River Region personnel worked hard on remodeling the La Barge Cr. cabin this summer. **Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird** said the floor was exhibiting signs of decay and, once they got underneath it, they discovered nearly all of the floor joists had rotted away from snow melt entering the cabin thru well intended, but ill-placed exterior vents.

"After some deliberation, it was decided that we would pour a concrete floor in lieu of replacing the old wood construction" Baird said. "In addition to the new floor, the walls were painted and new cabinets and counter tops installed. Work is still ongoing but the cabin looks (and smells!) so much better and should continue to serve as a welcome and comfortable place for employees to hang their hats in the southern end of the Wyoming Range."

"One very cool note from this project was, during the demolition phase, I discovered where the original builders of the cabin had signed and dated the inside of the wall behind the stove," Baird said. "The inscription shows the cabin started in 1958 and completed June of 1959; 'Carpenters 1st Class' include, presumably, husbands and wives Sheffner, Prasma, and Arnoldi. I cut this piece out of the wall and will frame it to hang in the cabin." (photo: top, left)

A huge thanks to everyone who helped upgrade the LaBarge Patrol Cabin! Even former game warden **Duane Kerr** showed up to work a shovel. (photo left, bottom, wielding the shovel)



*~ Illegal Trash Dump Cleaned Up ~ Boat Rescue~ Happy Antelope Hunters~*



*Photo:*  
*Justin Dodd*  
*WGFD*



*Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts* found a large pile of illegally dumped trash on the Medicine Butte HMA. "I was able to find several pieces of mail in the garbage and tracked down two youths who admitted to dumping the trash," Roberts said. "They agreed to complete eight hours of community service with Warden Roberts, where they will be picking up trash in the Evanston area."

*Roberts and fellow game wardens Justin Dodd, Rob Shipe, Allen Deru, and Chris Baird* also spent many hours checking watercraft users on area waters and at Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) check stations.

*"I had 40 enforcement actions as a result of people failing to stop at the AIS check station," Roberts said. "I probably could have wrote several hundred tickets for this as compliance is pretty poor. In addition, I wrote one citation to a person for failing to purchase the AIS Decal. Game wardens Baird and Deru also wrote tickets for AIS violations, as well."*

*Game wardens Rob Shipe and Justin Dodd* were called to rescue stranded boaters on Flaming Gorge Reservoir at 11:30 pm on September 3. The boat belonged to the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office and their motor quit in high winds and needed towing to shore. "The wind was howling and it was a pretty interesting rescue," Dodd said. "It was so dark and windy," Shipe said, "but we managed to get the boat to shore and no one was hurt." On a brighter note, Dodd did check this group of happy antelope hunters near Kemmerer. *(Photo: left, the Reichl Family)* *Kemmerer Game Warden also snapped this photo of the Bowen family on their antelope hunt. (Photo: left, bottom)*

*Enforcement Happenings*

*There* are unsolved poaching cases in the Green River Region. If you have any information about any wildlife violation please contact your local game warden or the **STOP Poaching Hotline at: 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847)**

- You can also report a wildlife violation at the WGFD website  
<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

Text keyword WGFD and message to TIP411 (847-411)

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~Cool Wildlife near Cokeville and Baggs~



Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas spent many hours helping landowners lessen damage to crops from waterfowl and big game this month. "Sandhill cranes and Canadian geese are particularly fond of barley grains and new re-growth on alfalfa fields," Hymas said. "Canadian goose and sandhill crane numbers are up in the Bear River Valley and Hams Fork drainage, while birds congregate and stage as migration times approach. The early waterfowl seasons are offering good opportunities for the lucky hunters with crane permits, and general goose hunters."

"White-faced ibis also join the large numbers of geese, cranes, and other birds that seek out alfalfa, grain fields, and wet meadows around the Bear River Valley in search of food," Hymas said. "Ibis nest in colonies around bulrush communities in wetlands and fly out to find feeding areas in nearby moist fields and meadows." (Hymas Photo: left, top)

"If you want to know if winter will come this year, ask a pika in the Lake Alice area above Cokeville," Hymas joked. "Pikas are working relentlessly on building 'haystacks' from dried forbs for the coming long cold months." (Hymas photo: left, center)

Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson spent many hours classifying antelope and spotted northern leopard frogs in the desert. "Just a fine evening classifying pronghorn," Olson said, "And what shows up when we get a little rain? How many leopard frogs can you find?" (Olson photo: left and night sky below)

Olson and Access Yes Coordinator Andrew Countryman also worked with Lucy Wold, GR Information and Education Specialist with interviews and photo-hoots on the Weber Ranch. (Wold photo below)







## Hunter Management Areas

[Go to Wyoming Game & Fish Homepage](#)



*A carved squirrel and rabbit hide in a cottonwood tree*

*Congratulations to Ray and Kathleen Weber for receiving the Access Recognition Program Award.* Southwest Access Yes Coordinator Andy Countryman says Ray and Kathleen Weber are owners and operators of Weber Ranch and own property from the CO State line to just south of I-80; approx. 28,160 deeded acres and approx. 32,000 leased.

*"Ray and Kathleen are from old ranching families and have been ranching all their lives,"* Countryman said. "They were both raised in the Little Snake River Valley, where they met, married and settled. Together they expanded their ranching operation to about 1,000 cows and 200 yearlings. Today, the Weber's have cut back on ranching responsibilities and lease out their grazing lands."

*"Not only is the Weber Ranch home to cattle and horses, but it also provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.* Habitat is extremely important to the Weber's; they feel if you take care of the land the land will provide for you. Habitat on the Weber Ranch is diversified- from cottonwood groves to sage brush/bitterbrush grasslands mix, to juniper forests. It also has riparian wetlands and grass meadows. It isn't unusual to see elk, deer, antelope, sage grouse, bald and golden eagles, hawks and owls, rabbits, furbearers, such as bobcats and badgers, with an occasional mink. Waterfowl and shore birds abound on the wetlands within the ranch boundaries."

*"The Weber's have generously partnered with their neighbors, Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake River Conservation District, Army Corps of Engineers and Game and Fish to create a premier wetlands known as the Muddy Creek Wetlands Project. This project is a showcase for the creation of wetlands for wildlife."*

*"Their willingness to go above and beyond, so hunters and wildlife are successful in Carbon County, is shown through their actions. As Wyoming is becoming more and more difficult to hunt due to private land closures, the Weber's stand out as people who continue to allow access and have a very positive effect on wildlife resources. They are landowners that are worthy of recognition for their generosity and good stewardship."* (Wold Photos: Weber's, Countryman, and Kim Olson, mule deer on the ranch, wetlands, and adorable wood carvings by Ray Weber.)



~Access Yes Booth at State Fair ~ Hunter Education Class~



Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru



WLCI's Jim Wasseen and Jade Wold (photo right) Lucy Wold helps students realize how bad hypothermia can be using her make-shift "ice chamber of death". Check out the smiles on these kids. (photo left)



Countryman also worked an Access Yes booth at the Wyoming State Fair last month (photos left top and center). The Regional Access Coordinators and Sara DiRienzo, WGFD Public Information Specialist in Cheyenne, manned the booth during the week of the fair, providing Game and Fish information, details about the new Access Yes program, and the new mapping system.

Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru, Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) Coordinator Jim Wasseen, and volunteer Matt Gardner assisted Lucy Wold with the August traditional Wyoming Hunter Education Course. (photos below) Wold also conducted a Internet Field Day with a large crowd of 28 students, including three nursing mothers, two 10-year old girls, and one man who did not speak English very well. "Let's just say there was no way I could pull this class off without the help from volunteers Brian and Sandy Taylor and John and Troy Gunyan," Wold said. "Just another day in the world of hunter education!"

Wyoming law requires that anyone who was born on or after January 1, 1966, and wants to hunt wildlife with a firearm on lands other than their own, must have a hunter education certification. Wyoming accepts certifications from other states and Canadian Provinces.

There are multiple options to get your certification: (1) 15-hour traditional class, (2) online and then attend the Internet Field Day, and (3) through the Hunter Mentor Program.

If you need to get your Wyoming Hunter Education Certificate just go to our website <http://wgfd.wyo.gov> and click on the Education Tab.



Office managers Sheila Watts (right) and Regina Dickson (left) have a little fun with their college football team rivalry. Sheila is a die-hard University of Wyoming Cowboy fan and Regina (poor misguided kid) is a die-hard Nebraska Cornhusker fan. Red beat out the old Brown and Gold, but the Cowboys gave it their best shot!

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## Conserving Wildlife-Serving People

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~Critter Spotlight~  
 Dusky grouse  
 By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

Dusky grouse family up the Hams Fork  
 fall 2015. (far left) Wold Photo

- **The Dusky grouse**, formerly known as the blue grouse (and still by us older hunters), is one of two "forest grouse" species found in Wyoming (the other being the ruffed grouse). Recently the name for this species was changed by the American Ornithologist's Union. The Blue Grouse was split into two distinct species due to genetic differences (the dusky grouse of the Rocky Mountains, and the Sooty Grouse of the Pacific Coast).
- **To further confuse the reader**, Wyoming has two subspecies of this bird that can be easily differentiated by the appearance of the tail tip. The "type" subspecies first described by Euro-Americans (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) has a light band of color at the tail tip about 3/4 inch wide. These are typically located in the southern and eastern portions their range in Wyoming, such as the Sierra Madres, Snowy Range, and Laramie Range. Our other subspecies is the Richardson dusky grouse (*D. o. richardsoni*) which has a tail without a terminal band. These birds are typically found from Kemmerer, northward into Montana and beyond.
- **Dusky grouse are a large forest grouse** popular with hunters for their delicious meat. Generally easily harvested when located, hunters often refer to this bird as a "fool hen" (given they are easily approached), or sometimes as a "pine grouse", due to the habitats they are often encountered in. Throughout much of the year, this species is generally associated with conifer forests, usually Douglas fir and spruce, sometimes with an aspen, or other habitat mix. Their diet consists of forb leaves, flowers, tree and shrub buds, seasonal fruits (like rose hips), and in winter, primarily conifer needles. In the summer, some insects are consumed, especially by growing young.
- **Dusky grouse are unique** in that a significant portion of the population do a "reverse migration" in winter, where the birds, especially adult males, will move upward in elevation during colder months. Some males never leave higher altitude habitats, often associated with whitebark or limber pines.
- **Male blue grouse do not congregate on leks** like prairie grouse, but conduct an elaborate display alone, involving hooting and noisy "flutter flights", in an attempt to attract females. Hens often move to lower elevations, even into sagebrush and grassland habitats to nest. There the hen lays 6-10 eggs that hatch in about 25 days. Like other chicken-like game birds, young dusky grouse are precocial (able to follow the hen immediately following hatch).